

Primary Ballot Count Leaning Toward Republican Candidates

Kitsap Sun

Primary Ballot Count Leaning Toward Republican Candidates

By Steven Gardner
Monday, August 25, 2008

Republicans in Kitsap County were more inclined to vote closer to Election Day, based on results provided this week by Kitsap County's elections office.

Gov. Chris Gregoire, a Democrat, had a 3 percentage-point lead over Republican challenger Dino Rossi in the county on primary election night, Aug. 19. As of Monday, Gregoire's lead was less than half a point.

Although county elections manager Dolores Gilmore said a change of a point or two is not unusual, Republicans have made gains in every partisan race but two as more ballots have been counted.

In the 26th Legislative District, Position 1 race, Jan Angel finished election night with a four-point lead in the county. That lead is now up to seven percentage points. In the race for the South Kitsap commissioner seat, front-runner Republican Tim Matthes' lead has grown over second-place Democrat Charlotte Garrido from 8.7 percent to 11.5 percent.

The only races in which Democratic candidates have seen leads increase are in the North Kitsap commissioner district, where current Commissioner Steve Bauer, a Democrat, went from a percentage-point lead of 29.5 to 30.5 over Republican Sandra LaCelle. State Rep. Christine Rolfes, D-Bainbridge Island, has seen her lead over Republican Mark Lowe rise slightly, from 22 percentage points to 22.4 points. Both races include the Democratic stronghold of Bainbridge Island.

The trend in Kitsap County has been the case throughout the state. Gregoire had a 4 percentage-point lead statewide after ballots were counted on election night. That lead has been cut in half since.

What makes it tough in using the primary results to project the general election numbers is that the Secretary of State's office is expecting a turnout almost twice that of last week's primary. Additionally, in the commissioner races, voters throughout the county will be able to cast votes in the general election.

In the closest race in the county, Republican Marco Brown's lead over fellow Republican Brad Gehring is growing as more votes come in.

Three counties reported new numbers to the Washington Secretary of State's office Monday, leaving Brown with a 155-vote lead over Gehring in the race for second place for the Position 1 seat in the 35th District state representative race. The one county that didn't report, Mason County, is where Brown enjoys his strongest support.

Brown finished election night with a 138-vote lead. As of Friday that lead was down to 10 votes.

Incumbent state Rep. Kathy Haigh, D-Shelton, had 56.6 percent of the votes as of Monday.

Percentage points will be the numbers to watch in the race between Brown and Gehring. If fewer than 2,000 votes and

half a percentage point separate the two, the election will subject to an automatic electronic recount. If following the recount the lead is less than 150 votes and a quarter of percent, it would trigger an automatic hand recount.

As of Monday, Gehring was within a half percentage point.

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|--|--|-------------------|---------|
| Candidate | | Vote | Vote % |
| Mike Kreidler (Prefers Democratic Party) | | 638,417 | 53.90 % |
| John R. Adams (Prefers Republican Party) | | 428,402 | 36.17 % |
| Curtis Fackler (States No Party Preference) | | 117,563 | 9.93 % |
| Total Votes | | 1,184,382 | 100.00% |

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Election Year:

2008

Office:

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Party:

ALL

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TOTAL INDEPENDENT SPENDING = Supporting: \$0.00 Opposing: \$0.00

Data for the current year is updated hourly

| Name | Pty | Contributions | Expenditures | Ind Sup | Ind Opp |
|-------------------------------|-----|---------------|--------------|---------|---------|
| JOHN ADAMS (details) | R | \$00.00 | \$00.00 | \$00.00 | \$00.00 |
| CURTIS FACKLER (details) | NO | \$5,950.00 | \$3,969.90 | \$00.00 | \$00.00 |
| MYRON MIKE KREIDLER (details) | D | \$119,613.86 | \$33,769.20 | \$00.00 | \$00.00 |

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Sunday, Aug. 24, 2008

Counties still tabulating ballots from primary

By the Herald staff

There were no changes among the leaders in the latest tabulations of primary election results in Benton and Franklin counties.

In results posted Friday on its website, Benton County said it still had 7,000 ballots to count from Tuesday's statewide "top two" primary. The county will certify the results Sept. 3.

The top two in each race will meet again in November.

In the 8th Legislative District Position 1 race, Brad Klippert had 4,974 votes to 4,444 for Skip Novakovich in a four-way Republican race to challenge Democrat Carol Moser in the November general election. Rick Jansons was next with 3,565 votes, while Steve Simmons had 3,175.

Moser had 10,286 votes, according to the latest tally.

In the Benton County Commissioner District 1 race, challenger Fred Staples had 4,343 votes to 4,181 for incumbent Leo Bowman and 2,250 for Merle Johnson.

In the District 3 race, Kennewick Mayor Jim Beaver had 5,282 votes to 3,890 for incumbent Claude Oliver.

Franklin County elections officials said 1,400 ballots remained to be counted, according to the county election website.

Monday, Aug. 25, 2008

Top two outcome gives second chance

For Benton County commissioners Claude Oliver and Leo Bowman, the top two primary was a huge success.

Sure, both are trailing their main challengers, but because Washington has changed the way it votes, the two incumbents still are in the race for the general election.

Before this election, the candidate who won the most votes in each party advanced to the general election, sometimes with only a relative handful of votes.

In partisan strongholds -- where candidates for one party split nearly all the votes or the weaker party doesn't even bother to field a candidate -- the November elections have been meaningless.

Not too many years ago, then-Commissioner Ray Isaacson was believed to be suffering a dip in popularity countywide, but faced only one other Republican in the primary. Democrats were nowhere in sight.

Primaries for county commissioner are held only in the specific district, while the general election is decided countywide.

Whether Isaacson did or didn't have a dip in popularity will never be known and doesn't matter.

By defeating his Republican opponent, Isaacson effectively was re-elected in the primary -- when only a third of the county's voters participate.

In the general election -- when the vote was countywide -- Isaacson was the only candidate on the ballot.

This time, Oliver and Bowman trailed opponents in the primary election but the winners don't get a free ride in the general election.

Returns Friday evening had Oliver, a Republican, trailing Kennewick Mayor Jim Beaver, another Republican: Oliver had 3,890 votes, or 42.4 percent, to Beaver's 5,282, or 57.6 percent.

Bowman, with 4,181, or 38.8 percent, trailed former Judge Fred Staples, who drew 4,343 votes, or 40.3 percent. Independent Merle Johnson drew 20.8 percent of the vote.

Under the old system, Staples would have faced Johnson in the general election and Beaver would be unopposed. Bowman would have been out.

The incumbents were given a second chance under the new system they would not have had under the old one.

And their chances could be good. Since the entire county will be eligible to vote in the general election, the constituencies will change.

It should make for a livelier next two months -- and a truer measure of the voters' choices -- than in many local elections of the past.

Published August 24, 2008

Top-two primary format delivers surprise

In the moments before tabulating the results from Tuesday's primary, Thurston County Auditor Kim Wyman was asked to pick an election upset. "What's going to be the surprise?" Wyman was asked.

She methodically clicked through the races - statewide and local - and concluded that chances for an election upset were pretty slim.

Then the computer started spitting out results and it became awkwardly obvious that there was an election upset - right there at the top of page three.

At the time, only one candidate was in the room - Jon Halvorson, Democratic candidate for county commissioner in District 2. And Halvorson was the victim of the upset.

Going into Tuesday's top two primary election, conventional political wisdom had Halvorson and former Democratic legislator Sandra Romero finishing at the top of the five-person commission race. The question was whether Halvorson, former mayor of Lacey, would out poll Romero or whether the former 22nd District lawmaker would beat Halvorson. Political observers predicted a tight contest with both Romero and Halvorson advancing to the general election in November.

Voters had a different notion.

That initial count of ballots showed a tight race with Romero leading Halvorson by just more than 600 votes. As Halvorson studied the election tally he said he was disappointed to finish behind Romero. It took another election observer to point out to Halvorson that there was a third name - that of Republican Robin Edmondson - sandwiched between him and Romero on the tally sheet. And in Washington's brand new top two primary, only the two candidates with the most votes advance.

Not only did Halvorson lose to Romero, he finished third behind Edmondson, too, and Halvorson's hopes for a showdown in November were squashed. You could see the shock register on his face - and on the face of other election observers as they talked in hushed tones about the upset of the night.

Reality set in - slowly. While Romero and Halvorson were evenly dividing 7,000 Democrat votes, Republican Edmondson was able to slide into second place by capturing a bulk of the GOP vote. It's one variance on the top two primary that few Thurston County politicians had envisioned. (With counts later in the week, Edmondson slid into the top spot).

Speculation immediately turned to why Halvorson finished third. He had raised the most money in the commission race - about \$52,000 - had been campaigning hard for a year and had personally knocked on more than 5,000 doors in the eastern third of the county soliciting votes.

While there is no question that Halvorson worked hard, turns out he had several strikes against him.

He was going against a popular former legislator who had equal, if not superior, name recognition with voters. And female candidates have always done well in Thurston County.

While Halvorson had a long, long list of endorsements, the official nomination of the Democratic party precinct committee officers went to Romero (77-63) - who also had 22nd District Sen. Karen Fraser and Rep. Brendan Williams in her corner. The endorsement of Democratic leaders carries clout in some South Sound political circles.

And there was one endorsement Halvorson probably wishes he hadn't received - that of the political arm of the Olympia Master Builders. Halvorson's opponents seized on that endorsement in letters to the editor and in private conversations billing Halvorson as the candidate in the pocket of big developers. The Master Builders' endorsement might have been a kiss of death in a community with a strong environmental ethic.

While speculation will continue as additional ballots are counted this week, there is one thing for certain. Washington's new top two primary is capable of delivering an election night shocker. Just ask Jon Halvorson.

Voters the real winners in Top 2 primary

Aug. 22 Daily News editorial

Apparently, voter participation in the debut of Washington's new, Top 2 primary fell short of Secretary of State Sam Reed's prediction of the highest turnout for a primary in a generation. But turnout was strong, considering that this was the state's first mid-summer primary and there was not a lot on the ballot to generate much excitement.

However many ballots are counted in the final tally, this clearly was the primary Washington voters wanted. More than six of 10 voters statewide chose the Top 2 primary system in 2004, and we remain convinced that they chose wisely.

The Top 2 is a close relative of the popular blanket primary that Washingtonians enjoyed for nearly seven decades, before the U.S. Supreme Court declared it constitutionally flawed. Like the blanket primary, the Top 2 allows voters to choose from candidates of all political parties listed on a single primary ballot. Unlike the blanket primary, which advances candidates from each of the parties to the general election, the Top 2 advances only the top two vote-getters, regardless of party affiliation.

This disregard for party affiliation is what enabled the Top 2 primary to pass constitutional muster. The Top 2 simply whittles down the field of candidates to two. That's a winnowing process, not a party nominating process. This understandably is a source of considerable frustration for political party leaders, who no longer are guaranteed of having a party representative on the November ballot.

The Aug. 19 primary, in fact, advanced two Republicans in three House races and two Democrats in five House races to the general election. Party bosses and other critics of the Top 2 view this as a bad thing. We see it as a positive. Why shouldn't voters in legislative districts be able to choose between candidates who they believe best represent their political views in the general election? The Top 2 allows that; the pick-a-party primary it replaced does not.

Democratic Party spokesman Kelley Steele complained this week to Associated Press writer Rachel La Corte that the Top 2 primary "offers voters less choice." It's an odd complaint from someone who prefers to limit primary voters to choosing from among just one party's candidates. The Top 2, in fact, ensures that all candidates advancing to the general election will be the choice of voters from across the political spectrum. It's a primary that favors moderate candidates. That's prescription for good government.

We agree with Reed, who told La Corte that the voters were the "big winners" in Tuesday's primary because they'll be presented in November with the strongest candidates in their district.

Friday, Aug. 22, 2008

Attack of the winnows, and other wordsmithing fun

When it comes to winnows, some of our readers vote in the uncommitted category.

That's clear after our Wednesday headline topping our front page about the primary voting results. It said:

'Top two' winnows field

At 12:30 a.m. Wednesday morning as we finished up a hectic night of gathering, writing, editing and designing our primary coverage, that headline seemed clever.

But it turns out a number of people have never heard of the word "winnow."

They either didn't understand the headline (no wonder) or thought we couldn't spell "winners."

As in the reader who wrote an e-mail that said, "This mornings headlines keep me laughing all day long. I know Wednesday the 20th was going to be a special pre-election day. Where the world is watching the USA's WINNERS take to the podium for their medals. We here in the Tri-Cities are watching the WINNOWS take the lead in our election race. I know we are a small stream in the ocean of politics, but when you mix a minnow with a winner, you of course get a winnow. Ahhhh, The Herald, thank you for a great Wednesday laugh. Laughter 'is' the best medicine. Oh and dont forget the 'Winnows' take all."

Another reader suggested we get a dictionary because the word doesn't mean that at all.

So we did grab our Webster's New World and look up the word "winnow."

Many of you, of course, know the primary definition of winnow is to "blow the chaff from (grain) by wind or a forced current of air."

Those same people likely know another meaning of the word is "to separate out or eliminate (the poor or useless parts)."

And that was the meaning we intended to describe in the ever-limiting format of a headline the process that occurred during our new "Top two" primary. In that primary, the two candidates with the most votes were separated from the rest of the field to run off for an elected seat in the November election.

'Top two' winnows field Get it now?

But although our definition was correct, what we did not take into account is that winnow is an old word that is rooted in the early days of agriculture. Regardless of the fact that today's wheat combines still do the winnowing process once done by hand, many people these days don't know that. Even one of our copy editors who grew up on a farm admits to never hearing that word.

So, oops, though we were correct, we shoulda known better and stuck to some more common language.

But we are glad to have brought some mirth to a few people's mornings. Darn, there we go again using mirth -- must be another attack of the winnows.

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In Our View: Top two primary is a huge success

Sunday, August 24, 2008

The warning about Washington state's top two primary echoed off the Cascades with near-hysterical alarm: "We could end up in the general election with two candidates from the same party! Oh, my gosh!"

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The warning came from officials of both major political parties, all of them apparently blind to the advantage each party could gain by dominating any particular race in the Nov. 4 general election. But beyond these frantic partisans, regular people (voters) heard the warning about two November finalists from the same party and responded: "And that would be bad because ...?" At which point the party officials would change the subject.

Two major realities emerged in this year's top two primary:

The warning was hollow.

Such a "frightful" possibility hasn't presented itself to any widespread degree. In fact, it hasn't surfaced at all in Clark County. Not one of the 14 local races to be decided in November will have two candidates of the same party. Those races are:

Congress — Incumbent Brian Baird (Democrat) vs. Michael Delavar (Ron-Paul Republican).

State Senate — Republican incumbents Don Benton and Joe Zarelli vs. Democrats David Carrier and Jon Haugen, respectively; incumbent Craig Pridemore (D) vs. Tom Langston (R, write-in).

State House — Incumbent Deb Wallace (D) vs. Micheline Doan (R); Jaime Herrera (R) vs. VaNessa Duplessie (D); incumbent Ed Orcutt (R) vs. Jonathan Fant (D); Jim Jacks (D) vs. Debbie Peterson (R); incumbent Jim Moeller (D) vs. Mike Bomar (Independent); Tim Probst (D) vs. Joseph James (R); incumbent Bruce Chandler (R) vs. John Gotts (D); incumbent Dan Newhouse (R) vs. Tao Berman (D).

County commissioner — Incumbent Marc Boldt (R) vs. Jeanne Harris (D); Pam Brokaw (D) vs. Tom Mielke (R).

Notice the great irony here. Party officials, despite their dire warning, couldn't have set it up any better themselves: Democrat vs. Republican, 14 for 14.

Even when the dreaded possibility became a reality, it was no big deal.

Around the state last Tuesday, only eight legislative races (out of 124) resulted in two same-party finalists. And this would be bad because ...?

There's something especially interesting about these eight races. Three are in conservative Eastern Washington, and in each case two Republicans are running against each other, put there by the voters. Five of these races are in liberal Western Washington, and in each case two Democrats are running against each other, put there by the voters.

We see nothing wrong with Republican finalists in conservative areas and Democratic finalists in liberal areas, especially when voters were presented with multiple views of other candidates in the primary.

David Ammons, former Associated Press reporter who serves as communications director for Secretary of State Sam Reed, began a press release on Thursday with this profound observation: "Under the provisions of the voter-approved Top 2 Primary, no party 'owns' a slot on the November ballot ..." That's what makes the top two primary special. It is owned by the people, not the parties. It is not the parties' sacred nominating process; it is the people's semifinals leading up to the November finals.

Although Louisiana has similar primary, ours is the only one designed specifically this way. Many other states, including Oregon, are watching closely. We predict the top two primary will spread like wildfire.

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Political Beat: Dunn finally tosses in the towel, throws support to James

Sunday, August 24, 2008


After insisting for two days that late-arriving ballots might save his reelection bid, state Rep. Jim Dunn conceded late Friday — and threw what meager support he had left to fellow Republican Joseph James.

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As of week's end, Dunn had won just 18.5 percent of the vote in the top two primary. He trailed James, with 33.2 percent, and Democrat Tim Probst, with 48.2 percent.

"Joseph has run an excellent race and will work hard for the citizens of the 17th District in our state legislature," Dunn said in a statement. "Therefore, I am asking my friends and supporters to please vote for and give support to Joseph James in the upcoming November election."

James would "continue to fight the 'spend and tax' mentality that is prevalent in Olympia and to block legislation that is not in the best interest of our residents," he wrote.

Dunn was first elected in 1996, defeated by Deb Wallace in 2002, and returned to Olympia by voters in 2004. Although his tenure was tainted by allegations of boorish behavior toward women, he was gracious in defeat, saying he was "grateful for the opportunity to have served the citizens of the 17th District for so many years."

—Kathie Durbin

Williams: Mielke will lose

The day after Tom Mielke ended fellow Republican Craig Williams's first race for county commissioner, Williams said Mielke has an "'anti-everything' message" that isn't likely to win in November.

"Tom had a lot of signs and name recognition, but he had nothing new to offer the voters, and it showed," Williams wrote in an e-mail Wednesday. "Tom's message is an old one that carried only enough weight to inch him out of this primary. It will not likely carry him to a general election victory."

Mielke, 66, finished second in the primary with 23 percent of the vote. Williams, 43, finished sixth with 5 percent.

Williams, an energy trader, put more than \$6,000 of his own money into the race. A religious conservative, he called on men to "increase their respect for womanhood" and on his party to increase its respect for environmental regulation.

"Every so often, conservatism needs to be redefined," Williams said Wednesday. "You know, the Ron Paul phenomenon in our country and in our county was another part of that."

Williams added that he hopes Mielke will win.

County Commissioner Marc Boldt, another Mielke backer, said Williams is mistaken about the future of conservatism.

"I doubt that he'll get a Christmas card from the Republican Party," added Boldt, 53.

—Michael Andersen

Lothspeich: I'm outta here

Vanquished county commissioner candidate Brad Lothspeich spent Wednesday driving around picking up "Brad" signs.

"We knew going in that Tom had a huge amount of name recognition," he said. "We knew that we had to try to counteract that, and we weren't successful."

Lothspeich dismissed arguments that he should have played up his conservative side in the primary. "I ran and said what I thought on the issues," he said. "That's the way I feel."

Unlike the also-defeated Matt Swindell and Craig Williams, Lothspeich didn't immediately endorse the surviving Republican, Tom Mielke. He said he hasn't thought about the general election yet.

He said he'll donate his leftover signs to his friend, Mike Bomar, a local BIA lobbyist running for state legislature against Democratic Rep. Jim Moeller.

"I think it's probably more of a blue year than a red year, and I don't know if that will make a difference on county races," he said. "I hope it doesn't."

Also unlike Swindell and Williams, who both said they plan to run again (Swindell: "This January ... I'll start saving my money for county commissioner in four years") Lothspeich isn't sure.

One thing he's sure of: He needs a vacation. Lothspeich, a former Fire District 6 chief who married district spokeswoman Leah Edwards in May, said he's going on a honeymoon.

"We never got one," he said with a laugh.

Their destination is undisclosed.

—Michael Andersen

Parroting the party line

Rep. Jaime Herrera, the Ridgefield Republican who was appointed to fill the 18th District vacancy left by the resignation of disgraced Rep. Richard Curtis, is circulating a flier that repeats a discredited claim.

Noting that the state faces a deficit of more than \$2.5 billion, the flier warns that "the people who run Olympia today are already talking about which tax they will raise. They are also considering a state income tax."

Republican gubernatorial candidate Dino Rossi was the first to make that claim last year, during the run-up to his formal announcement that he would seek a rematch with Gov. Chris Gregoire.

Gregoire's staff has repeatedly denied that she is considering or will propose an income tax. In July her campaign dismissed the allegation as "a big lie." That hasn't stopped Rossi from repeating the claim.

Its source is an interview Gregoire gave to the editorial board of the Spokesman-Review in Spokane last year, in which she said, in effect, Not now. Maybe someday.

For a further deconstruction of the governor's position on the income tax, see a link to a recent Seattle Times article on The Columbian's political blog.

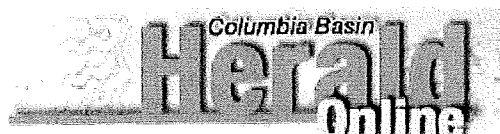
—Kathie Durbin

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Print Page

Top-two triumph

New primary encourages voting

Finally,

We were able to vote for candidates in the recent primary without picking a party or signing an oath, and we were able to choose candidates from all parties.

Better yet, every one of our votes mattered.

This was the first time our top-two primary system was used. As voters we approved of the system in 2004 setting the grounds for a primary election where the top two vote recipients were allowed to continue their campaigns and have the issue settled in the November general election.

Despite the voters' approval of the new primary — the very people political parties are trying to woo - the Republicans and Democrats sued to stop it from being used. The U.S. Supreme Court backed Washington voters' desire to choose candidates regardless of party affiliation with 7-2 vote in favor last March.

This was the second time the Democrats and Republicans sued our state to stop us from voting the way we wanted to. This is where the requirement to pick a party and swear allegiance to them came from. The only voters in our state were to be Republicans or Democrats.

The parties failed to listen to their own representatives elected to office. Representatives from the 13th District, Judy Warnick, R-Moses Lake, and Bill Hinkle, R-Cle Elum, both opposed the lawsuits and requirements.

Thank goodness for the U.S. Supreme Court.

Now we can vote for the candidates we think will do the best job, regardless of their party. We can base our decision on their platforms, advertising, speeches, past records or even a flip of a coin.

We're free to choose who we want. Hard to argue with that.

In the first top-two primary, we saw the governor race be reduced from 10 candidates to ... well, two. The Republicans and Democrats can relax, it is their candidates who are still in the race until Nov. 4.

The primary also showed the potential power of rural counties to select state officials. With enough people voting, Eastern Washington could decide the election, rather than sit back and let Western Washington do it.

Gov. Chris Gregoire is currently leading the race with 49.15 percent of the votes, with achieving the majority in 11 out of 39 counties.

Challenger Dino Rossi is trailing with 45.24 percent of the votes with receiving the majority of votes in 20 counties, including Grant and Adams counties.

Votes count.

Challenger Peter Goldmark, a Democrat, is trailing incumbent Doug Sutherland, a Republican, by only 7,283 votes for the office of commissioner of public lands. The guy who is going to lead the state Department of Natural Resources. Sutherland received 50.43 percent of the votes and Goldmark 49.57 percent.

But it's not over. They have until Nov. 4 to campaign and woo our precious votes.

On the home front, the Grant County commissioner race is a nail biter. The difference between candidates was 50 votes Wednesday night.

Challenger and Republican Carolann Swartz received 2,051 votes for 50.61 percent.

Incumbent and Republican LeRoy Allison received 2,001 votes for 49.38 percent.

Every vote matters.

We have two months to watch candidates' campaigns closely. If you weren't part of the 42.97 percent of the registered voters who cast their ballots in Grant County, you have time to step up and take part in the general election on Nov. 4. In Adams County, 45.39 percent took part.

Not every county was as active in choosing our state and local leaders, as we were in Grant or Adams counties. The statewide average is 26.7 percent. More than 80 percent of Seattle voters didn't bother to vote.

If Eastern Washington voters increase their turnout for the general election, we will decide who is our governor and which candidates are to become our state leaders.

All it takes is one vote ... your vote. Yes, you who didn't mail in your ballot. If you don't vote, don't bother complaining with who you get for government representation. We won't listen. All you had to do was vote.

— Editorial board

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LATEST UNOFFICIAL PRIMARY ELECTION RESULTS

By Dedrick Allan 23/08/2008

Election officials in the Mason County Auditor's Office counted nearly 6,000 additional ballots from Tuesday Primary Election. No major changes to report other than some candidates increased their leads.

For Mason County Commissioner District Two, Democrat incumbent Tim Sheldon and Democrat Roslynne Reed are still the top two candidates. Sheldon now has 2,419 votes or 45.62% while Reed now has 1,332 votes or 25.12%. Republican Deborah Reis trails Reed by 118 votes now with 1,214 votes or 22.89%. The third candidate in the race, Independent Frank Benavente, now has 338 votes or 6.37%. As long as the number hold, the two Democrats will face off in the General Election.

In the race for Mason County Commissioner District One, Democrat incumbent Lynda Ring Erickson increases her lead on fellow Democrat Rick Ryan. Ring Erickson now has 2,980 or 62.38% to Ryan's 1,797 or 37.62%.

In the race to replace the retiring James Sawyer for Mason County Superior Court Judge Position One, Amber Finlay now has 5,536 votes or 38.92%, followed by Dan Goodell who now has 4,846 votes or 34.07%. The third candidate in the race, Richard C. Adamson, now has 3,843 votes or 27.02%. Finlay and Goodell will be on the November General Election Ballot.

For Mason County Superior Court Judge Position Two, incumbent Toni Sheldon has increased her lead on challenger Monty Cobb and is retaining her seat. Sheldon now has 9,481 votes or 66.92% to Cobb's 4,686 or 33.08%.

And in the race for Mason County P.U.D. No. 3 Commissioner District Two, Tom Farmer and Doug Womack are still to top two candidates. The latest unofficial numbers have Farmer with 2,167 votes or 45.85%. Womack has 1,450 or 30.68%. The third candidate in the race, Herb Gerhardt, now has 1,109 or 23.47%. On November 4th, all registered voters in Mason County will be deciding between Farmer and Womack.

More ballots will be counted at 4 PM Wednesday. To date, Mason County Election officials have counted 15,882 ballots bringing the turnout to 51.32%.

In the 35th District State Representative Position One race, Marco Brown has increased his lead on Brad Gehring to 205 votes. Brown now has 7,216 votes or 21.89% to Gehring's 7,011 or 21.27%. The two Republicans are fighting it out to decide who will face Democrat incumbent Kathy Haigh. Haigh now has 56.83% of the vote or 18,731.

In the race for Bill Eikmeyer's Position Two seat, the top two

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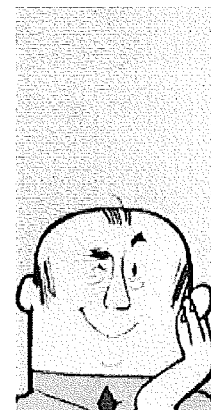
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candidates are still Democrat Fred Finn and Republican Randy Neatherlin. Finn now has 11,844 or 36.69% and Neatherlin now has 10,365 or 32.11%. The other two candidates in the race are Republican Herb Baze and Democrat Daryl Daus, who still both have not received over 16% of the vote.

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Article published Aug 23, 2008

Gregoire, Rossi race tightens up

OLYMPIA — As more ballots are counted in the state's slow-moving, mostly mail-in primary, the closer some races are getting.

The race for governor — between Democrat Gov. Chris Gregoire and Republican Dino Rossi — has narrowed as their respective vote totals climb. Gregoire is now ahead 48 percent to Rossi's 46 percent. That's with 59 percent of the state's precincts reporting.

Another race that has gotten closer is for Superintendent of Public Instruction. In that race, incumbent Terry Bergeson leads with 40 percent of the vote but challenger Randy Dorn now claims 33 percent. In the race for treasurer, however, Wenatchee native Allan Martin slightly widened his lead to 45 percent over Democrat Jim McIntire with 39 percent.

Perhaps the closest legislative race in the state is in District 7, to the north, where — thanks to the "top two" primary — two Republicans are tied in their bid for the seat of retiring Rep. Joel Kretz, R-Wauconda. With 61 percent of the precincts reporting, Shelly Short and Sue Madsen each has 26 percent of the vote atop a five-person field.

Legislative District 7 covers a wide swath of the northeastern part of the state, taking in Omak and the eastern part of Okanogan County plus all or parts of five other counties.

Wenatchee World staff



In Our View: Adios, Jim Dunn

Thursday, August 21, 2008

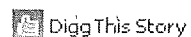
The end of Jim Dunn's legislative career arrived not with an appreciation banquet but with his pathetic showing in Tuesday's primary. Only 18.4 percent of voters in the 17th Legislative District thought the state representative should return to Olympia, where even his fellow Republicans had stripped him of committee assignments.

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Adding to the pathetic nature of this story was Dunn's contention Wednesday that the race is not over. Election officials — more skilled in math than Dunn — said that, for him, it was. Dunn was destroyed by two rookies. Democrat Tim Probst (48.8 percent) and Republican Joseph James (32.6 percent) advanced to the Nov. 4 election.

But is Dunn really done? Remember, after he lost to Deb Wallace in 2002, Dunn regained a state rep's seat in 2006 by defeating Pat Campbell. The difference this year is the severity of self-inflicted humiliation. In losing to Wallace, Dunn gained 49.35 percent of the vote. This year's paltry 18.4 percent likely signals the long-overdue end.

None too soon. Dunn's party punished him after he made an allegedly inappropriate comment to a female legislative aide. State GOP leaders said he could regain committee posts by enrolling in sensitivity training. Dunn refused. Now he has no one but himself to blame.

It is said that Tuesday's unique top two primary advanced no winners, only finalists, but the people of the 17th district can count themselves as big winners. Now there's hope for positive legislative contributions from Dunn's replacement.

Elsewhere in the aftermath of Tuesday's primary, here are a few myths worth discounting:

Myth: Brad Lothspeich must've made a lot of mistakes.

Reality: Not in our view. It is rare that a rookie politician prepares himself so well, learns the issues so thoroughly, works so hard to gather key endorsements and campaigns so admirably, as Lothspeich did this year. When he finished third behind Pam Brokaw and Tom Mielke in the race for county commissioner District 1, many veteran election observers were stunned. Possible explanations are Brokaw's role as the only Democrat in the race, the venerable Mielke's name recognition, and the stampede of six non-Democrats crowding out Lothspeich. We hope he runs again.

Myth: A few incumbent state reps stacked up some impressive percentages (including Jim Moeller, 64.1 percent; Ed Orcutt, 61.7; and Deb Wallace, 59.9).

Reality: Maybe not. Another grueling campaign awaits all of them, and more than twice as many voters can be expected in November. Here's another reason Probst shouldn't get too excited about leading James by 16 percentage points in the primary: Probst still got less than half the votes, and, presumably, most of Dunn's voters will favor Republican James in November.

State Sens. Joseph Zarelli and Don Benton, for their part, posted only mildly impressive percentages of 53.8 and 53.5, respectively. So look for tough races this fall from their Democratic opponents: David Carrier against Benton and Jon Haugen against Zarelli.

Myth: The local voter turnout was disappointing.

Reality: It was typical. Primaries in even-numbered years have been posting turnouts in the mid-30-percent range, and that's where the final turnout is likely to register this year. We wished the voter-friendly nature of the top two primary had drawn more local participation, but it appears that primaries lure only the more dedicated and consistent voters.

Besides, a huge wave of voters could emerge in November. In the 2004 presidential election, the local turnout was about 84 percent. This year, with hotly contested and highly publicized presidential and gubernatorial races returning, it could go even higher.

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EDITORIAL: Voters Won in State's First 'Top Two' Primary

The most significant victory in Tuesday's primary election wasn't won by a candidate, but by the public.

"Voters were the biggest winners because they got what they wanted, which is a wide-open primary," said Secretary of State Sam Reed.

On Tuesday, voters in Kitsap and other counties participated in the state's first "top two" primary election. It marked a return to a much-beloved (by voters) and much-despised (by parties) primary election in which voters could pick candidates freely in each race, regardless of their political party.

From 1935 until 2003, that's the way it was for voters with the state's blanket primary system, allowing voters to cast ballots for a candidate of any party in each race, with the top Democrat and the top Republican advancing to the general election. That system ended after a successful court challenge by the state's Republican, Democratic and Libertarian parties.

Two years ago, it was replaced by the misbegotten "pick-a-party" primary, in which voters were limited to casting ballots only for candidates from the same party. In Kitsap County, that meant that individual voters had to choose between sheriff's race, which had only Democratic candidates, and a county commissioner's race which had only Republicans.

Voters passed an initiative for the "top two" primary in 2004, the parties again filed their expected lawsuit and, earlier this year, the "top two" was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. Tuesday's election was the first time it was put into practice.

So how did it work? Splendidly. The balance of power shifted back from the parties to the people. And predicted scare scenarios didn't materialize into reality. Before the election, party leaders and other critics had said the new system would result in general election races between two candidates from the same party. But in fact, that was a rare occurrence in Tuesday's election, and it likely will be in future elections.

Our political parties can still be relevant under the new system, but only if they adapt to it. Under a closed partisan primary, they largely "owned" the choice of candidates who would advance to the general election. With the "top two," they'll have to earn it.

That means parties will need to pick stronger candidates, ones who appeal to voters and not just to the party leadership. Today's independent-minded voters are less likely to be bonded to one party's politics, and more likely to support candidates who can build coalitions to accomplish stated goals. That can bring only good — for the public and the parties.

In months prior to the election, state party leadership said they were planning legal challenges against the "top two" system after the election was held. We hope they don't.

To serve their own interests, the parties sued to overturn the state's old blanket primary election.

To serve the public's interests — and their own — they should now leave well enough alone.



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Tacoma, WA - Friday, August 22, 2008

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'Top two' may have been Tuesday's big winner

THE NEWS TRIBUNE

Last updated: August 21st, 2008 01:25 AM (PDT)

All the surviving candidates are happy with their percentages. All of them did better than expected, and all of their opponents did worse than expected. All of them have the momentum going into the fall.

Tuesday's primary is being spun every which way by partisans using it to project victories in November and keep the campaign cash rolling in.

The returns may or may not say something about the general election – depending on the offices involved, the candidates on the ballot and other factors. But let's take this primary at its face value: a snapshot of how politically engaged Washingtonians voted a few months before the final event.

Start with the governor's race. Before the election, Dino Rossi's opponents set a high hurdle for him: He had to beat or at least tie Gov. Chris Gregoire in order to have a chance in November. When the dust settled, he was trailing her by a few percentage points, and she'd done better in some counties – including Pierce – than she did in 2004.

But whatever they say publicly, Gregoire and her supporters weren't resting easy Wednesday. She's had four years in office, has genuine accomplishments to point to, enjoys all the advantages of incumbency and is a thoroughly known quantity. Yet Rossi – who fought her to a statistical tie in 2004 – remains within striking distance. If she were any kind of a shoo-in for re-election, it shouldn't have been this close.

In the state's only battleground congressional district – the 8th – Democrat Darcy Burner fell a bit short of U.S. Rep. Dave Reichert. Just like she fell a bit short in the final two years ago. Strong Democrats should be riding higher in this political climate, and Republicans should be playing catch-up.

Still, there's always Barack Obama, who remains very popular in Washington. His presidential candidacy may well give both Gregoire and Burner a healthy bounce this fall – assuming the Democrats haven't already gotten their bounce from the public's disenchantment with George Bush.

There were no big surprises in other top-of-the-ballot races.

The most contentious has been the battle for superintendent of public instruction. Incumbent Terry Bergeson is almost synonymous with the roundly maligned Washington Assessment of Student Learning, which was developed on her watch and which she has outspokenly defended for years.

Anti-WASL forces have gravitated to her leading challenger, Randy Dorn. Given how loud they've been, you'd think the whole state was up in arms about the test. As it turned out, Bergeson easily outpolled Dorn. Washingtonians may be signaling – once again – that they want real academic rigor in the public schools and will vote for the candidate who looks most likely to deliver it.

The "top two" primary itself may have been the biggest winner Tuesday. Many citizens were gratified that they could again vote for anyone on the ballot regardless of party, as they could under the old blanket primary the courts threw out.

But again, primary results don't automatically translate into final results. One of our concerns with top two has been the

way it will limit political and philosophical choice in the November ballot. Virtually all minor and third party candidates will now be frozen out of the final election, and some voters will see only two Republicans or two Democrats on the ballot in certain contests.

So far, though, that's a price Washingtonians appear willing to pay for a primary that mimics the one we loved and lost.

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'Top two' was more fun before votes were cast

PETER CALLAGHAN; THE NEWS TRIBUNE

Last updated: August 21st, 2008 01:25 AM (PDT)

How best to analyze an election that is already in danger of being the most overanalyzed primary in state history (at least until the next election)?

Perhaps by suggesting that most of the pre-election hand-wringing and prognosticating was wrong. Of course we all needed something to do over the summer, what with the weak weather. But most of the story lines created for this "first-ever 'top two' primary" just didn't approach reality.

Not that I didn't take part. It was fun, after all. And all the kids were doing it. Still, we should keep the following in mind as we approach the "historic" general election of 2008:

1. The top two primary didn't cause confusion or disruption or provide the parties with a legal argument that it violated their rights.

Those were some of the predictions after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Washington's new primary was constitutional.

The biggest complaint was that it might result in a November runoff between two Democrats and two Republicans and would disenfranchise some voters. In fact, just seven Legislative races statewide will have such a runoff. All are dominated by one party and in four of them only candidates from that dominant party filed.

While Republicans filed candidates in three other districts, they had no chance of winning. Instead, voters will have a contest between a liberal and a moderate. The vote will constitute a choice, not a rubber stamp.

2. The primary electorate didn't prove to be aberrant.

The pre-primary spin became comical, with both parties claiming the primary was designed to benefit the other. The poor-mouthing reached the point that Republican Dino Rossi's campaign and the state Democratic party wrote dueling analyses saying they were probably going to lose.

Depending on the analysis, primary voters would be older, more conservative, more liberal, more likely to be a schoolteacher (and therefore more Democratic), more all sorts of things. So, they seemed to be saying, pay no attention to the voter behind the curtain (a "Wizard of Oz" allusion that made more sense when we voted behind a curtain, but you get the point).

And what happened? As of Wednesday, Chris Gregoire leads Rossi about 49 percent to 45 percent in the governor's race. How does that compare to polls that used a random sample that purported to be a more accurate representation of the state than the primary would be? Survey USA found the governor's race to be 50-48 Gregoire; the Rasmussen Poll was 50-46, Strategic Vision was 47-45, and Moore Information was 45-45.

Only the Elway Poll was significantly different (52-36 Gregoire), but he showed 12 percent undecided.

3. The WASL doesn't appear to be as potent a political issue as some WASL opponents had hoped.

Randy Dorn wasn't the first choice of those who want to repeal the Washington Assessment of Student Learning as one of several graduation requirements. The Washington Education Association had endorsed Richard Semler of Richland. But he dropped out, so the union turned to Dorn, a former Eatonville principal and state lawmaker.

And it looked like he was making life tough for three-term incumbent Terry Bergeson. One poll gave Dorn a substantial lead, and some Bergeson advisers feared he would win a majority in the primary and appear on the November ballot alone.

Didn't happen. Bergeson, who has supported school reform and the WASL as strong-but-necessary medicine, had won 41 percent in a six-person primary as of Wednesday. She'll face Dorn (31 percent) in November. But her total is higher than in the 2004 primary, when she received 36 percent. That year she won with 55 percent in November.

In the 1996 election, she won 38 percent in the primary before winning her first term with 63 percent.

Rossi, too, had been toying with making anti-WASL a key part of his platform. He might have to reassess.

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Bruce and Doris Kelley tend one of several drive-up "Vote By Mail Express Booth" stations in Tacoma, Wash., Monday, Aug. 18, 2008. (AP Photo/The News Tribune, Janet Jensen)

Washington primary produces one-party showdowns

By RACHEL LA CORTE — 1 day ago

OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — There were few surprises when Washington unveiled its new primary system, but a handful of statehouse races spotlight one of the system's most interesting facets: two people from the same party moving on to the general election.

Eight legislative races in November now are shaping up as one-party showdowns — six in the House and two in the Senate.

In some cases, like the race for the Senate's 11th District, there wasn't even a second-party challenger.

That means Senate Budget Chairwoman Margarita Prentice, who was claiming 49 percent of the vote in Tuesday's primary, will likely be facing one of two Democratic opponents when all mail-in votes are counted.

Other contests had candidates from more than one party, but still saw two hopefuls with the same party preference moving on to November. One example: The 36th District House seat vacated by retiring Rep. Helen Sommers, a Democrat, now being sought by Democrats Reuven Carlyle and John Burbank, who edged out Republican candidate Leslie Bloss.

For critics of the new top two system, these one-party general election ballots — and the opening for candidates not endorsed by the parties — isn't a good idea.

"It's a stretch to call this election a primary," said Washington State University political scientist Lance LeLoup, who is not a fan of the new system. "It's the first round of a general election. So the state of Washington, in a literal sense and historic sense, no longer has a primary. The parties really can't choose their own nominees anymore."

But Secretary of State Sam Reed called the election a success, and said the voters were the "big winners" because they'll be presented with the strongest candidates in a given district.

"They best represent the district because they're the top vote getters," Reed said Wednesday. "There's a certain logic that says they ought to be the ones squaring off in November. They'll have to campaign through November and be accountable to voters. That's healthy for our process."

The top two primary system, which voters approved in 2004 and was patterned loosely after Louisiana's system, was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court earlier this year. The top two finishers advance to the general election on Nov. 4, regardless of party.

And since the top two is a winnowing primary rather than a nominating contest, candidates get to align themselves with whichever party label they want, even if they're not the "official" candidate of the state parties.

In the race for U.S. Rep. Brian Baird's seat for the 3rd District, Baird, a Democrat, easily advanced, but the official Republican candidate, Christine Webb, was trailing behind fellow Republican Michael Delavar in early returns.

The Democratic and Republican parties' concerns were mostly unrealized, with most of their preferred candidates in the top races, including governor, treasurer and attorney general, all moving forward.

Democratic Party spokesman Kelly Steele said regardless of that fact, the primary "offers voters less choice."

"We think the system has some problems," he said. "I'm not sure where it's going to go. We don't have any immediate plans to claim harm from what happened yesterday, in a legal



sense. We'll see how this all pans out."

In its ruling, the Supreme Court noted that since a top two primary had not yet been carried out, there was no basis for the parties' argument that voters would be confused.

The political parties believe that leaves the door open for them, and they're still pursuing challenges on various aspects of the law in federal courts.

"I'm still optimistic we'll win that lawsuit and the top two will be found to be unconstitutional," state Republican Party Chairman Luke Esser said.

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Article published Aug 21, 2008

It's just the primary, but ...

By [Tracy Warner](#)

Editorial Page editor

Observations on Tuesday's primary election:

□ Democrats running against Republican incumbents in Chelan County are supposed to lie still and be trounced, but somebody forgot to tell Chuck Largent. Running against County Commissioner Ron Walter, Largent has tallied 52 percent of the primary votes counted so far.

It shouldn't be a surprise. Largent was campaigning in August like it was November. He and his supporters were regulars on Miller Street at rush hour, with T-shirts and signs, waving at passing cars. His pamphlet was left on more than a few doorsteps, and doorbelling is not standard practice in the summer heat. If making a good showing in the primary is part of Largent's strategy, he succeeded.

It was only the primary, of course, so this 52 percent may be meaningless. The primary in a commissioner race is confined to voters in the candidates' home district. District 1, Wenatchee to Malaga, is Largent's home turf, where he is well known and often well liked. It is Walter's turf, too, but while Largent mounted the August hustings, Walter seemed not to do much more than put up a few signs. The November election is countywide, with voters from places where Walter is known and Largent, not so much. And Walter will no doubt decide to join the campaign soon.

Largent realistically it still an underdog. But, he's in with a chance. Win or lose, he will prove that Democratic candidates here need not be timid sacrificial lambs or eccentric no-hopers. Campaign hard, and you get votes.

□ Chris Gregoire has been governor for nearly four years, but incumbency hasn't helped much in Chelan County, the very place where the 2004 election was decided. In the 2004 general election, Rossi won 63 percent of Chelan County's votes to Gregoire's 34.6 percent. In the 2008 primary, in the counting so far, Rossi has 61 percent to Gregoire's 33.9 percent.

It's only the primary. There will be three times more votes cast in the general election, after more than two months of nasty campaigning that could change much, but so far in these narrow Eastern Washington confines, there is no sign of a strong incumbent surge. But this is Chelan County, where in 2000 a Seattle radio talk show host beat the incumbent Democratic governor by 15 percentage points.

□ There was some speculation that with the top-two primary, the race for state treasurer might be the one to feature two Democrats in November. The candidates were impressive: former state economist ChangMook Sohn, famous for his uncanny precision as a revenue forecaster; and legislator and economist Jim McIntire, former House Finance chair. They were running against the state assistant treasurer and former Chelan County Treasurer Allan Martin. It was Martin the Republican who had a strong endorsements from the Democratic incumbent Mike Murphy, but nevertheless he was from the wrong party and from the wrong part of the state. But with the primary dust partly settled, it is Martin in the lead, with 44 percent of the vote, to McIntire's 40, and ChangMook Sohn's 15.

There is far to go. The general election is not the primary, and more people didn't vote for Martin than voted for him, but still a point was made.

And so, it is possible that a graduate of Wenatchee High School may be elected to statewide office. It's about time.*

(*Secretary of State Sam Reed was raised in Wenatchee, but graduated from Lewis and Clark High School in Spokane.)

Tracy Warner's column appears Tuesday through Friday. He can be reached at warner@wenworld.com or 665-1163.

DAILY RECORD

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Wednesday, August 20, 2008 1:17 PM PDT

Kittitas County elections: Huber, Jewell advance

By MIKE JOHNSTON
senior writer

KITTITAS COUNTY – Kittitas County commissioner District 1 voters gave the most primary votes to Democrat Linda Huber and Republican Paul Jewell who now advance to the Nov. 4 general election where their race will be settled countywide.

In the District 2 race independent Paula Thompson was the top vote-getter and will advance to the general election along with incumbent Republican Alan Crankovich.

District 1

According to unofficial vote totals Tuesday evening from the county Auditor's Office, Huber received 1,304 votes, or 44.2 percent of the vote to Jewell's 1,189 votes, or 40.3 percent of the vote.

Independent candidate Desmond Knudson garnered 457 votes, or 15.5 percent of the ballots received.

In the general election, all county voters will cast ballots for both the commissioner Districts 1 and 2 races.

"I'm pleased, very pleased," said Huber this morning. "I thank the voters, my campaign volunteers and my family who all supported me. I'm looking for their continued support going into the general election."

Huber is presently the District 1 commissioner and was appointed earlier this year to fill a vacancy on the three-member board created by the resignation of Commissioner David Bowen. District 1 takes in the southeast section of Ellensburg and the county.

Noting she had a 115-vote lead over Jewell, Huber said she believes the 4 percentage-point spread between them will continue as more mail-in ballots are counted.

Huber said she hopes that slight lead was due to the voters recognizing the practical experience she has in county government. She said the primary candidate forums have been "constructive," and the campaigns to date have been "clean, positive and informative."

"I hope the campaign continues that way," Huber said.

She said she appreciated Knudson's participation in the race, and said he "raised very good issues and questions" in the campaign "in his own, unconventional way."

Jewell said the results were "very exciting and gratifying" to him, allowing him to go on the general election.

Jewell said the results were "very exciting and gratifying" to him, allowing him to go on the general election.

"It's been a lot of hard work and effort by everyone involved — me, my family and my community volunteers," Jewell said.

He said he was "cautiously optimistic" that he will maintain the vote spread between himself and Huber, and perhaps improve his position as more mail-in votes are counted this week.

Jewell said he was looking forward to campaigning countywide and to continue to discuss the issue of county government leadership to "bring family-sustainable jobs to our county."

"That's the most important issue facing us today and into the future," Jewell said.

Knudson acknowledged he was out of the general election running saying "the people have spoken."

Knudson said he would have liked to have advanced to the general election, and he was disappointed, but said "life goes on." He indicated he will continue to be involved in the local political and government process, especially in energy issues.

He said he will give his support to Huber who is a fiscal conservative. He thanked his supporters and those who voted for him.

Position 2

In the race for Position 2 on the Kittitas County Board of Commissioners, challenger Paula Thompson and incumbent Alan Crankovich will face off in the November general election.

Thompson topped four contenders in the race with 36.4 percent of the vote (1,288 votes). Crankovich received 31.6 percent of the vote (1,116 votes). Nick Henderson received 18.7 percent (661 votes) and Kim Green received 13.3 percent (472 votes).

"I'm very pleased and appreciative that the voters placed their confidence in me," Thompson said. "Just from talking with voters in the district I'm not really surprised by the outcome. It seems to me that people want to know who you are and I wanted to make an effort to let them know."

Thompson, who has been outspoken about concerns about what she says is "urban-style development" in rural areas and the need for economic development, waged an aggressive campaign that included extensive one-on-one contact with voters.

"I did a lot of talking to people," she said. "You get a feeling for what they're feeling. I figured I would be in the top two."


Thompson's results didn't surprise Crankovich, who is finishing his first term in office.

"I'm obviously pleased that I'm heading to the general election," he said. "With all honesty, it went about as I expected. Paula has worked very hard and put forth a great effort. She did an excellent job of going out and promoting herself. She's been everywhere and done a lot of things. Of all the candidates, she worked the hardest."

Crankovich said Thompson's "focus is on land use. Land use is a headline issue. This job is so much more than land use. People tend not to realize that."

Despite finishing second to Thompson in the primary, he voiced optimism about the general election.

"One of the advantages/disadvantages of being the incumbent is that people judge you on your performance," he said. "I'm confident my performance over the last four years is going to benefit me in the long run. Now the real work starts."

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Contest in 35th District grows tighter


By Brad Shannon | The Olympian • Published August 22, 2008

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A third day of vote counting in Kitsap and Thurston counties drew one unsettled 35th legislative race to within 24 votes Thursday, as Republican Marco Brown clung to the second spot behind Rep. Kathy Haigh.

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Brown and Republican "Blue Collar" Brad Gehring are vying for the right to challenge Haigh, a five-term Democrat from Shelton, on the Nov. 4 ballot.

The latest vote count left Brown with 5,237 votes and Gehring 5,213, well behind Haigh's 14,123. Brown led by 131 votes one day before, and both candidates appeared content to wait until all votes were in.

The race is the closest of any pending in South Sound. The 35th district sprawls over parts or all of four counties from west Thurston to parts of Bremerton. Additional counts are planned today in all four counties: Thurston, Mason, Grays Harbor and Kitsap.

Thurston County commission race

The latest count added to Republican Robin Edmondson's lead over Democrat Sandra Romero for the District 2 race for Thurston County commissioner.

Edmondson had 5,684 votes to Romero's 5,358. In third was Democrat Jon Halvorson, with 4,614, followed by independent Bill Pilkey with 1,503 and Democrat Lucius Daye with 527.

In the governor's race, first-term Democrat Chris Gregoire opened a nearly 35,000-vote edge over Republican Dino Rossi with nearly 1.1 million votes collected.


Brad Shannon is The Olympian's political editor. He can be reached at 360-753-1688 or bshannon@theolympian.com.

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Thurston County turnout

Thurston County now has collected 62,778 ballots, enough for turnout of 44.9 percent — just shy of the 48 percent predicted. The county has about 10,000 votes yet to count, Thurston County elections officials said.

Statewide turnout

The turnout inched up after Thursday's counts, to 31.5 percent, far short of the 46 percent that Secretary of State Sam Reed had predicted. Reed has said the new top-two primary is popular with voters because it lets them pick any candidate from any party.

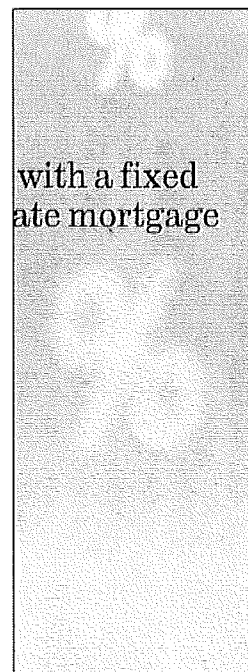
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